

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-8: (canceled)

9. (currently amended) A system for providing fee-based access to content, comprising:

a service provider site that collects payments from users, including single-action payments initiated from pages of external sites; ~~and, said service provider site being configured to collect payments from users of~~ a content provider site that is external to the service provider site, the content provider site comprising a content page, and including an additional page that includes a selectable link to the content page, said link including a reference to the service provider site to allow the service provider site to collect payments, ~~said content provider site and service provider site operated by different respective entities;~~

wherein selection of the link by a visitor who is registered with the service provider site causes ~~a browser of said visitor to send a message directly to the service provider site, the service provider site being responsive to the message from the browser by to charge~~ charging the visitor a fee for accessing the content page, ~~and causes by immediately redirecting the browser to the content page to be displayed by a browser of the visitor,~~ whereby the ~~system enables the~~ visitor ~~to may~~ pay for and access the content page with a single action.

10. (currently amended) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site is ~~responsive to selection of the link by redirecting the browser to the content page~~ identifies the visitor using a cookie that is transmitted by the browser to the service provider site with said message.

11. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site causes the content page to be displayed together with a payment confirmation message.

12. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site causes the content page to be displayed together with a control for allowing the visitor to negate payment of the fee.

13. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site includes a link creation tool which creates coding for embedding single-action payment links within external web pages.

14. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site and the content provider site are operated by independent entities.

15-40: (canceled)

41. (currently amended) A method for providing payment-based access to a digital work, comprising:

hosting the work on a content provider site in association with a link to a payment service provider site;

on the payment service provider site, in response to selection of the link by a user:

~~(a) collecting payment from~~ executing a payment transaction in which the user is charged a payment amount for accessing the work; (b) generating a string containing transaction information associated with the payment transaction; and (c) redirecting a browser of the user to a destination location on the content provider site such that the string is passed via the browser to the content provider site with a destination URL; and

on the content provider site, determining whether the string passed with the destination URL is valid to determine whether the user is authorized to access the work, and providing the user access to the work when the string is determined to be valid.

42. (original) The method as in Claim 41, wherein the string is passed in an encrypted form.

43. (original) The method as in Claim 41, wherein the link is to a payee-specific pay page hosted by the service provider site.

44. (original) The method as in Claim 41, wherein the link is a single-action payment link which, when selected, causes both (a) payment to be completed, and (b) the browser of the user to be immediately redirected to the destination location, whereby the user completes payment without viewing the payment service provider site.

45. (currently amended) A computer system that provides a network-based payment service, the computer system comprising:

an electronic data repository that stores account data associated with each of the following: (a) a plurality of users that are registered to make payments via the payment service, (b) a content provider that is registered ~~with~~ to use the payment service to collect payments from the registered users for accessing content provided by the content

provider, and (c) a web site operator that hosts, on a web site, a payment link that is selectable by the registered users to pay for and access the content provided by the content provider; and

a server system coupled to the electronic data repository, the server system operated by a payment service provider that is separate from the content provider and the web site operator, the server system being separate from the web site, and being responsive to selection by a registered user of the payment link on said web site by charging the registered user a fee for accessing the content and causing redirecting a web browser of the registered user to access the content;

wherein the payment link points to the server system such that selection of the payment link by a user causes a browser of the user to send a request message to the server system, and wherein the server system divides the fee between at least the web site operator and the content provider, such that the web site operator and the content provider each receive a portion of the fee.

46. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system causes the web browser to access the content by returning a redirect message to redirect the web browser to an external web location that is separate from said web site and said server system.

47. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 46, wherein the server system hosts a web-based application that provides functionality for the user to specify said external web location, and to associate the external web location with the payment link.

48. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 46, wherein the server system includes an encrypted access string in a target URL portion of said redirect message to enable the external web location to verify that the registered user is authorized to access the content.

49. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system is configured to process the selection of the payment link as a single-action transaction, such that the registered user is charged the fee and is provided with access to the content without having to perform any subsequent action.

50. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system determines an amount to be paid to the web site operator by calculating a commission that is dependent on the fee.

51. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system divides the fee between at least the web site operator, the content provider, and a service provider that operates the payment service.

52. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the web site is an external web site that is not hosted by the server system.

53. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the content is served to the web browser by the server system.

54. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system hosts a web-based application that provides functionality for payees to design payment links, and to publish such payment links for web site operators to host.

55. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 54, wherein the web-based application additionally provides functionality for a payee to specify and publish a commission amount to be paid to the web site operators for referrals resulting from the payment link.

56. (previously presented) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the content is an article authored by the content provider.

57. (currently amended) A computer-implemented method for providing user access to content and for allocating user payments for accessing such content, the method provided in association with a link hosted by a first web site of a first entity, said link being selectable by users during browsing of the first web site to pay for and access content, the method comprising:

detecting selection of said link by a user, and in response to said selection: (a) charging the user a fee associated with accessing the content, and (b) ~~causing~~ redirecting a web browser of the user to ~~access~~ a web page that includes or provides access to the content, said web page associated with a second entity, and being part of a second web site that is separate from the first web site; and

dividing the fee between at least the first entity and the second entity, such that the first and second entities each receive a portion of the fee;

wherein the method is performed by a networked computer system that implements a payment service, said networked computer system being separate from the first web site and the second web site;

wherein the link points to the networked computer system, such that selection of the link by the user causes a browser of the user to send a message to the networked computer system.

58. (currently amended) The method of Claim 57, wherein the ~~second web site is separate from the networked computer system, and the step of causing the web browser to access the web page~~ step of redirecting the web browser comprises sending a redirect message from the networked computer system to the web browser.

59. (previously presented) The method of Claim 58, wherein the redirect message includes an encrypted access string that, when passed by the web browser to the second web site, enables the second web site to confirm user authorization to access the content.

60. (previously presented) The method of Claim 58, wherein the redirect message redirects the web browser to a URL pre-specified by the second entity via a user interface of the networked computer system.

61. (previously presented) The method of Claim 57, further comprising allocating an additional portion of the fee to a provider of the payment service.

62. (previously presented) The method of Claim 57, wherein the first and second web sites are external to the payment service.

63. (currently amended) The method of Claim 57, wherein the web page is served by the networked ~~server~~ computer system, and includes or provides access to content uploaded to the networked server system by the second entity.

64. (previously presented) The method of Claim 57, wherein the user is charged the fee, and is provided access to the content, solely in response to selection of the link, such that the content is provided to the web browser without the user performing any action subsequent to selection of the link.

65. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the system charges the visitor the fee, and controls the visitor's access to the content page, without the use of any order or payment processing software on the content provider site.

66. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the method is performed such that the browser does not display any page other than the content page when the visitor selects the link, whereby the transaction appears to the visitor to be performed on the content provider site.

67. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the service provider site includes a web form that includes a field for an operator of the content provider site to specify a destination URL to which users who select the link are to be redirected.

68. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the service provider site comprises a link creation tool that generates, and outputs via a web-based interface, link coding for adding payment links to content provider sites, and wherein said selectable link of said additional page comprises link coding generated by said link creation tool.

69. (New) The system of Claim 68, wherein the link creation tool includes a user interface that enables a content provider to specify a payment amount to be charged by the service provider site when a user selects a payment link.

70. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the link comprises a display object served by a server of the service provider site, said display object being selectable by the visitor to pay for and access the content.

71. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the service provider site additionally implements a service that enables visitors to post comments about the content page, and to view comments posted by other visitors, while viewing the content page, said comments stored and served by the service provider site.

72. (New) The system of Claim 9, wherein the service provider site implements a service that enables the visitor to perform a selection action on the content page to cause an article displayed thereon to be added to a personal library, said personal library maintained by the service provider site.

73. (New) The method of Claim 41, wherein the method is performed such that the browser does not display any page of the service provider site between the user's selection of the link and the user's access to the work.

74. (New) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system, by redirecting the web browser to the content, causes the web browser to immediately access the content in response to user selection of the payment link.

75. (New) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system includes a web-based interface that enables the content provider to configure the server system with a destination URL for said payment link, said destination URL being a URL of said content.

Appl. No. : **09/928,977**
Filed : **August 13, 2001**

76. (New) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system includes a web-based payment link generation tool that generates and outputs link coding for adding payment links to web sites that are external to the server system, said payment links providing functionality for the server system to collect payments from users based on user actions performed on said external web sites.

77. (New) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system is configured to dynamically serve a display object of said payment link to browsers of users who access said web site.

78. (New) The method of Claim 57, wherein the method is performed without the use of any order or payment processing software on either the first web site or the second web site.

79. (New) The method of Claim 57, wherein the networked computer system immediately redirects the web browser to the web page of the second web site in response to the user selecting the link, such that the user does not view any intervening web page.